

**2016 National Exemplary Awards for  
Innovative Substance Abuse Prevention Programs, Practices and Policies  
APPLICATION COVER SHEET  
(INCLUDE WITH APPLICATION)**

1. Has this intervention been submitted for an Exemplary Award in previous years? [Circle one]

Yes    No

2. What is the primary target for this program, practice or policy? [Circle one]

Individual                      School-Based                                      Family/Parent                      Peer/Group  
Workplace                      Environmental/Community-Based X                      Other

If Other, explain: \_\_\_\_\_

**PROGRAM INFORMATION**

Program Name: Refuse to Use program \_\_\_\_\_

Agency: The Collaborative \_\_\_\_\_

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I have reviewed the information contained in this application and certify that it is accurate, to the best of my knowledge.

  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Program Director Signature

5/6/16  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

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\_\_\_\_\_  
Nominating Agency Signature

May 6, 2016  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

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## ABSTRACT

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**The Collaborative (TC)** is a substance abuse prevention coalition with a mission to promote the development of a healthy involved community supporting substance free youth in a caring environment. TC, a 501©3 designated organization that joins diverse organizations toward a goal of community health and wellness, youth substance abuse prevention and family supporting activities. TC's coalition began in 1999.

In 2002, Michael Cobb, Stratton Mountain Resort's head of marketing, came to The Collaborative and with a vision that would support young people in the decision to be substance free. The Collaborative Executive Director and he came up with the program, **Refuse to Use (RTU)**. The idea was that RTU would combine a healthy alternative with prevention education and support it with a pledge to be substance free.

The Collaborative came up with a menu of suitable prevention education activities, recruited teacher volunteers at the schools, developed a pledge to be substance free and Stratton provided the ski pass as the incentive to the program. Students in grades 7-12<sup>th</sup> at local schools, were invited to join the program resulting in up to 425 students participating yearly. Since 2002 more schools and partners have joined.

All students and families in affiliated schools are invited to participate. Participating students agree to take part in five prevention education events by mid-February and sign a pledge to remain substance-free. Prevention events happen after school at each school. Parents or guardians must attend two of the prevention education events and sign a pledge to support their children in their efforts. In return, student participants receive a season pass to Stratton Mountain Resort, Riley Rink (an ice-skating rink), or Viking Nordic Center. The Dorset Theater Festival provides students who successfully complete the program free entry to a series of summer performances. Students who are reported by their school, family or themselves for substance use have their pass revoked. Passes can also be suspended for lack of attendance at prevention events. The purpose is not to catch participants for using but to increase their exposure to prevention education and educate them about the risks and harms for substance use. To increase the ability of students to attend prevention education events we offer several make up events. Refuse to Use reinforces students' choice to be substance-free with positive prevention education and affirms it by rewarding them with a healthy alternative.

To date, there are ten participating schools, thirty-five volunteers, over 400 student participants, and over 100 hours of substance use prevention education yearly. The completion rate for all schools in 15-16 was 77.3% in a season where the snow was late in coming and early to leave the slopes. Participants successfully complete the program when they have successfully upheld their pledge and when they have attended all five required prevention education events.

The Collaborative believes that a pledge to be substance free, out of school time prevention events and healthy alternatives together build resiliency. Our statistics support this belief. In 2014 – 15, 94% and in 2015 – 16, 98% of participants said that they plan to honor their pledge. 79% in 2014-15 and 92% in 2015-16 say that the pledge and prevention activities help them to refuse to use substances. In 2014, less than 3% of passes were pulled because of substance use.

## A. Philosophy (10 points)

The Refuse to Use program has a strict no use policy; participants sign a pledge to refuse to use and parents sign a pledge to support them in their endeavor. Our philosophy around the program is not about how many students we can catch using but about how many prevention education opportunities we can provide to a participant and parent. It is also about encouraging participants in using a healthy alternative like skiing, riding or skating and drama.

By involving schools, parents, businesses and others in the Refuse to Use program it is clear that our whole community has a part to play in youth substance use prevention. The Collaborative keeps the Search Institute's developmental assets in mind when planning and assessing activities and programs. We know that the more developmental assets youth have – and consciously identify with – the more resilient they will be and the greater their chances of growing into healthy, vital adults. When we ask students and parents to pledge we exercise the internal developmental assets of integrity, honesty, responsibility and restraint. Because parental involvement is required we are increasing positive parenting skills and increasing communication between parents and children about substances. This reinforces the external developmental assets of family support, positive family communication, other adult relationships, community values youth and family and school boundaries.

The Collaborative understands it's important that parents and children begin talking about underage drinking when the children are still young. Parents are required to attend two events. One is the kick off where over 400 participants and their parents say their respective pledge to each other out loud for all to see and hear. This spurs conversation about the intent behind a no use pledge, the integrity that it takes to uphold a pledge and the parents' role in the pledge. The second Refuse to Use event that parents are required to attend is an *intergenerational dialogue night* that encourages communication between parents and youth. During dialogue night, youth participants lead parents in discussions about topics that are of importance to them, subject matter can flow from substance use to self harm to distracted driving and bullying. Topics are chosen by Collaborative staff and RTU volunteers and are appropriate to the age group and current events.

The Surgeon General's report notes that most young people who start drinking before age 21 do so when they are 13 or 14 years old. That is why it's important to start talking about underage drinking and other risky behavior early and keep talking, and it's why The Collaborative believes that all adults working with young people should send a consistent message. Our message is that not every teen uses substances so, *wait, support your peers and Refuse to Use*. There is nothing a young person under 21 is missing out on if they use substances or engage in other risky behavior before they are of age. The social, emotional, physical, mental and financial consequences are greater than what a teen brain can truly understand of these consequences if poor decisions or actions are taken under the influence. Education and communication with young people matter, they may not show it but they listen.

The program pledge taken by the student states:

*I will refuse to use alcohol, tobacco and any other drugs, I will not misuse any over the counter or prescription drugs, (i.e. diet pills or cold medicines, etc).*

*I will support my friends in their choice to Refuse to Use alcohol, tobacco and other drugs.*

*I will behave respectfully and responsibly at RTU events and while using my pass.*

*I will not make any claims of illegal substance use in any printed material, public, speech and/or Internet site (Facebook, Snap Chat, Instagram etc).*

*I will attend at least five of the scheduled substance use prevention education programs sponsored by my school or The Collaborative.*

*By joining the RTU program I understand that I voluntarily give my word that I will honor this pledge and I will follow the guidelines.  
If I cannot uphold this pledge I understand my pass will be terminated.*

The program pledge taken by parents/guardians and caring adults states:  
*I will support my student in their choice to be and remain substance free.  
I will notify the School Representative or The Collaborative if my student is unable to honor their pledge, and uses alcohol, tobacco or other drugs and therefore violates their pledge. I know that this will mean termination of my student's pass and that we will be provided resource referrals.  
I will provide or assist with my student's transportation to the scheduled substance abuse prevention education events.  
I will support my student by attending the Kick-Off event and Dialogue Night in January.  
In the event of a family scheduling conflict I will notify the Refuse to Use Representative at my student's school and attempt to make alternate arrangements.*

Participants cite using the pledge as an excuse when faced with a choice to use alcohol or drugs. The pledge works.

## **B. Needs Assessment (30 points)**

The Collaborative was founded by a handful of moms sitting around the kitchen table talking about how their children were at risk of substance use because there were no activities for them past elementary school in the community. They worked to form The Collaborative and received a Drug Free Communities grant. One of our founding mothers husband was the head of marketing at Stratton Mountain Resort. Michael Cobb noticed that kids stopped going to mountain after 6<sup>th</sup> grade. In Vermont most elementary school kids who live in a mountain community receive a ski pass and lessons for a nominal fee. When teens reached middle and high school there was no reduced price pass so many kids stopped utilizing the healthy alternative that is skiing and riding on the mountain. He came to The Collaborative with an idea to increase participation at the mountain. When kids are young they qualify for the reduced price pass because they agree to participate in lessons. For middle and high school students we would change the requirement and have them attend classes in prevention education. Refuse to Use was born.

Although we were a fledgling organization in 2002 when RTU began, RTU has helped us increase coalition capacity and strengthen relationships with partners. When we ask people if they are familiar with The Collaborative, the program that they are most familiar with is the Refuse to Use program. The Collaborative manages several programs through the DFC grant that was held for ten years and expired in 2011. These programs included student empowerment groups, hosting of substance free events for teens, positive social norms campaigns and parent education. Since the DFC ended The Collaborative is going strong with the help of state grants, foundation and local support, fundraising and fee for service activities. We continue to support student empowerment groups, work with community partners to host substance free events for teens, provide parent education and continue to plan, facilitate, and evaluate the Refuse to Use program

The Collaborative uses the Strategic Prevention Framework and assessment is a part of every project. Initially when we did the needs assessment there was little or no health education in the high schools. High Schools and middle schools continue to struggle with a dedicated health education curriculum that includes substance use prevention. In our rural community students go to small elementary/middle schools and then head to the larger high school several miles away. This creates a disconnect for parents who lose communications with their children and with their children's friends'

families. The Refuse to Use program increases interaction between parents and children and increases interaction between parents in the program and increases connectedness to school.

In the Youth Risk Behavior Survey, we continue to monitor responses to the question of use and perceptions but also about feeling connected to the community. The Collaborative and Stratton Mountain Resort saw a gap here that could be filled by using partners in the school, community and from The Collaborative to show that we are all responsible for a healthier community. For high school students this hovers just over 50% and has increased over the last six years.

Our area is rural and isolated, the economy is tourist driven, seasonal layoffs are a way of life. In contrast since it is a tourist community there is a very affluent population and the main commerce towns perpetuate this affluent demeanor with high end outlet shops and expensive boutiques and restaurants. The area is surround by three ski mountain resorts. Ski and snowboard culture is a culture of alcohol and marijuana use. Young people frequently are offered drinks from flasks in the gondola to the top of the mountain from strangers.

Regardless of these risks there are several protective factors for this community including schools that have a focus on higher education, and a community that engages and appreciates young people. The Collaborative is the local substance use prevention organization and it has been active in this community since 2002.

To stay current with local trends and attitudes The Collaborative hosts focus groups intermittently. We work with the high schools to get a group of students that represent a wide range of attitudes and experience and use other young people to ask the questions. The recorded answers are reviewed and this helps us stay abreast of perceptions around substance use, trends in substance use and the perception of the Refuse to Use program.

Parents in the Refuse to Use program were not always required to participate in the prevention education events. When we looked at our community survey we saw that adults in our community did not think that they played a role in youth substance use even when they indicated that they were parents. After pulling a parent focus group, we determined that we needed to increase parent participation and we needed to do it in a manner that increased buy in to the program, knowledge of substance use prevention and communication. We developed a parent pledge to compliment the participant pledge. We made two events mandatory; the kick off event where the pledge is taken and a youth led dialogue night designed to increase youth/adult communication.

An internal needs assessment is done at the end of each season. This is done by reviewing the participant and parent surveys and evaluating the retention and use statistics of the program. The Collaborative uses the Results-Based Accountability method to internally assess the program with Collaborative staff, participants and volunteers. After seeing a huge drop in participation with the senior class, we used the Turn the Curve exercise. As a result, the senior class has a different curriculum that holds students accountable for learning and teaching a topic of personal interest. After meeting with the seniors and adult volunteers a new curriculum was built, the seniors really liked the change. One senior said, "I liked that the curriculum was a lot looser than it has been in the past. I liked learning about what interests me and doing my own research on it. I liked hearing about what my peers were interested in as well."

In 2003 around the time when we first started the Refuse to Use statistics in Bennington County for 30 day use of alcohol was 40% and in 2013 it was 30%. In our county use rates are decreasing.

### **C. Population(s) Served (20 points)**

The program's target population is seventh through twelfth grade students and their parents in the Mountain and Northshire communities of rural southern Vermont. Throughout the ten schools who participate in the program, their students reside in Townshend, Newfane, Harmonyville, Jamaica, Rawsonville, Winhall, South Londonderry, Londonderry, Peru, Manchester, Arlington, Dorset, East Dorset, Landgrove, Sunderland, Weston, Stratton, and West Dover. Youth who are homeschooled but have affiliation with one of the schools are welcome to participate.

The communities that encompass our service area are frequently thought to be affluent but it would be a disservice to our communities to wash over the extent of the poverty in our area. Socio economic disparity is Southern Vermont's largest element of cultural difference. The main economy is service industry, tailoring to second homeowners and three seasons of vacationers. The largest employment sector in the Manchester area is "service providing" with the top three employers in the recreation, service and retail industries. Manchester, VT and the surrounding towns are known to many as a destination location; outlets, three skiing mountains, Appalachian trail just up the hill among many other hiking trails, and playhouses for theater. There is a little bit of everything for everyone, who can afford it. For the locals who enjoy these amenities, they work in the industry. Unfortunately working in the industry leaves little time in many family schedules to take advantage of these great activities. RTU gives students the opportunity to enjoy a healthy risk-taking alternative to substance use. There are opportunities to ski together as a family on Sundays because of a discounted ticket price. This gives families an activity to do together, be together having lunch and having conversations on the lift, in the car, and just being together as a family.

Although the program fee is of minimal cost (\$50) compared to a regular season pass (\$650), we are aware there is still financial burden on some families. Scholarship forms are readily available, any family who submits a scholarship receives it in full. If we learn of a student who is need of equipment, we work with to obtain gear in order for the student to be warm and safe. Schools have arranged particular days for their bus to drive participants to the mountain and pick them up. This works well for parents who are working on the weekends, school breaks so participants can take advantage of their pass if they don't have transportation.

We have a large presence on social media; Facebook, Twitter, Instagram and we use these to make sure our target population is appraised of the Refuse to Use program and important dates. To make sure that we access those without access to a computer we put up posters and advertise with a slide at the local movie theater. We also utilize ads in free local newspapers for the kick off in September. We directly target our population by putting an informational letter into the start of the school year packets. The informational letters are also given to participating schools to hand out to new families who enroll during the school year. The program is open to all in the participating schools and each school helps with the advertising utilizing each schools venue of communication. Although registration for the program is online we have permission to use school computers and school volunteers are available to assist. Paper registration forms are available upon request.

The Programs Coordinator oversees the RTU program for the last ten years. Tasks involve facilitating the volunteer meetings, reviewing the surveys given to students and parents, developing the Dialogue Night curriculum, staying knowledgeable on national statistics on youth substance use, trends in types of use and substances, and disseminating Youth Risk Behavior Survey data. All Collaborative staff

attend cultural competency trainings on a regular basis. All staff are trained in Bridges Out of Poverty from a local facilitator. The Programs Coordinator facilitates conversations on cultural competencies with the volunteers at each of the volunteer meetings. When available we share training opportunities on cultural competency with volunteers.

Our volunteers are very important to this program because they do the direct interaction with the students. Because of their position and relationships, they have built with the students, they talk to them about what's going on in their school community and the community at large. During times of evaluation, volunteers give us feedback about what students are saying, seeing, hearing, regarding youth substance use. During the dialogue night events, they take note of discussions happening in groups and report back information that help the program grow.

#### **D. Building Capacity (30 points)**

As previously described, The Collaborative began as a grassroots effort from local moms to engage their teens in healthy activities and avoid the problems associated with youth substance use. They helped develop our mission to promote a healthy, involved community supporting substance free youth. The same efforts that got The Collaborative off the ground helped to get Refuse to Use up and running. We started with a partner of Stratton Mountain Resort and an idea. We still needed to get the teens, parents and schools on board. We hosted teen focus groups to find out their level of willingness to go to outside of school time activities. The ones that were interested we used to begin talking to teachers and administration about the project. Teacher volunteers were recruited in this manner. We also spoke with parents about their level of commitment to help their kids get to the prevention education events. Our plan began to form. We began with two school and five events without parent participation. We didn't have an MOU for schools. We loosely explained the policy to volunteers and we began. We had much to learn from the first year but the good news was that teens got to the mountain, volunteers reported engaged participants and schools were happy to facilitate the meetings and communications. We used our happy participants and volunteers to communicate our successes to other schools and families. Over the 14 years of the program we progressed from 2 schools to 10, 60 participants to over 400, 6 volunteers to 35 and 0 parent involvement to over 500 parents.

Over the years that The Collaborative has been in existence we have become, for our communities, a convener of partners around supporting substance free youth. We brought together ten schools from four different school districts to participate in the Refuse to Use program. We have brought together three competing organizations in Stratton Mountain, Riley Rink and Viking Nordic to provide incentives for this program. Beyond Refuse to Use, The Collaborative is responsible for monthly county wide Prescription Drug prevention meetings that bring together the medical community, Vermont Department of Health, pharmacists, law enforcement, recovery centers, treatment providers and parents to prevent prescription drug misuse. These efforts have ranged from developing and promoting a county wide 24/7 prescription drug collection at local law enforcement agencies to surveying all prescribers in the community on opiate prescription practices and convening a meeting of pharmacists and prescribers to increase communication and problem solve. The Collaborative also know that getting to meetings is hard and we can sometimes spread our messages better by attending others meetings and talking about The Collaborative and our initiatives. We go to community health team meetings, school board meetings, town meetings, park meetings and meetings of other youth serving organizations. We also spread the word of our programs through information booths at large community events. We have become known for our efforts and are regularly called on to present at meetings or events.

The Collaborative, as the local community coalition, and Refuse to Use heavily rely upon some of the twelve coalition sectors; schools, youth, parents and businesses specifically for RTU. Through our



other outreach to support Refuse to Use other sectors are consistently brought in and increase The Collaborative's capacity. For example; during our kick off in 2011 we invited several members from the fire, police and rescue squad to speak at the kick off that included over 400 parents and participants. At the 2015 kick off our featured speaker was the District Attorney. Through Refuse to Use we are always looking for traditional and non traditional partners. These partnerships tend to extend beyond the event that they are invited into, they are or become active members of The Collaborative.

To keep our stake holders interested on our efforts we provide them with information to disseminate, provide data briefs, and offer help where we can. For instance, we have provided advice on tobacco policy for Stratton Mountain and Riley Rink. We keep our media contacts engaged by submitting regular press releases and articles. We also host a show on local cable access. Once a year we present at the interfaith council meetings.

In 2007 the Refuse to Use program made a commitment to involve parents more deeply and began requiring them to attend two of the prevention education events. One is the kick off event and the other is a dialogue night. This deepens the connection with the parent sector and provides them with insight into all of the collaborators in the RTU program.

As a youth substance use prevention organization, we have used campaigns to integrate into the RTU program; social hosting, positive messaging to adults and students, and Above the Influence. During our positive messaging campaign, we were able to change parent perception regarding serving alcohol to underage youth by 11% within three years. Each of these messages put out into the community increases the ability of the community to own their role in supporting substance free youth. Additionally, we utilize email communications to parent participants to share articles designed to strengthen communication and increase education about substance use and brain development.

RTU program's partnerships and collaborations have expanded over the years. Participating schools began with Flood Brook Union School and Burr & Burton Academy. Over the years Maple Street School, Manchester Elementary-Middle School, The Dorset School, Long Trail School joined the program. The most recent additions are The Mountain School of Winhall, Leland and Grey Middle & High School and Arlington Middle & High School.

Three years ago, a neighboring coalition wanted to replicate the program at another local ski resort. The Collaborative worked with them to share policies, evaluation and philosophy. They are now in their third year of the program and very successful. The core structure is the same; prevention education events with parental involvement at two events. They have adapted our model for their communities needs.

Although Stratton distributes the most passes for participants, Riley Rink and Viking Nordic have been partners from its earliest years. These partners are great when it comes to participants accessing their facility and they are always willing to host extra activities outside of their commitment to the program; for instance; Riley Rink will hold middle school skate nights at a discounted price for participants. Viking Nordic always offers discounted rentals to those who are in need. Stratton has offered tubing tickets at a discounted price for participants. These organizations are respected in this program as connecting a large group of community members to do something they enjoy. This is a huge financial investment but worthwhile in promoting healthy lifestyles for future and current employees, customers at their facilities and families in the community.

Many students will attest that life stories and experiences are very impactful as they learn to refuse to use. RTU volunteers ask community stakeholders to come present at their workshops, K9 units, substance use counselors, emergency room nurses/doctors, pharmacists, emergency response services,

just to name a few have all come and presented at prevention education events. A local state trooper and his dog came for a presentation on dangers of alcohol, driving, and other drug use. Steve Waldo, retired investigator & educator from the Department of Liquor Control, gave presentations about alco-pops and underage drinking to several middle school groups for the last seven years. Guest speakers from a local Alcoholics Anonymous group spoke to a group about their life experience and knowledge.

Our local Vermont Department of Health has been a huge supporter of the Refuse to Use program from the start. Yearly, representatives from the health department come to the Kick Off and dialogue night.

#### **E. Strategic Planning (30 points)**

**Goal:** Reduce substance use in area middle and high school youth

**Objective:** Provide outside of school time substance use prevention education at area schools

**Objective:** Involve teacher and parent volunteers to provide substance use education from each participating school

**Objective:** Mandate parent participation in two events

**Story:** The needs assessment indicated that health education in schools was insufficient. Refuse to Use supplements this education.

**Goal:** Increase access to healthy alternatives to substance use

**Objective:** Partner with local businesses to provide incentives to youth

**Objective:** Use volunteers to show youth a variety of healthy alternatives

**Objective:** Secure opportunities for family participation in the healthy alternative activity

**Story:** The needs assessment indicated that students reported that there “isn’t anything to do” in the community and reduced price access to the mountain was restricted to students in K-6 grades. Refuse to Use fills a gap with an incentive of healthy alternatives in winter and summer. Between the educational events, the middle school skate nights, healthy alternatives fair, going up to the mountain to ski/ride, having access to summer theater tickets, there are things to do within the program that are at no cost to the student and giving them an opportunity to hang out with their friends. The Collaborative believes each member, organization and system plays an integral role in conveying to youth the clear and consistent message that youth are expected to be substance free and rewarded for their commitment

**Goal:** Engage the whole community in supporting substance free youth

**Objective:** Use social and traditional media to promote RTU

**Objective:** Use social and traditional media to educate about the risk and harms of substance use

**Story:** Students reported in the YRBS their connection to the community was around 50%. Refuse to Use increases this connection by bringing in volunteers and business partners to support substance free youth. The longer we can prevent initiation of substance use, the less likely it is that a person will become addicted. When youth and adults are provided enough information and cultural support, they will make healthy decisions to avoid the onset of substance use.

**Goal:** Engage youth in substance use prevention

**Objective:** Increase youth participation through leadership opportunities

**Story:** Increasing leadership skills increases developmental assets that increase the resiliency skills that help young people grow into healthy, caring, and responsible adults.

Communication goes a long way in this program to ensure long term sustainability. The coordinator holds face-to-face meetings with the volunteers on a monthly basis, creates documents for volunteers to report on and readily available via phone or email to troubleshoot and immediate issues. The coordinator stays in touch with the partnering organizations for pass distribution and pass holding throughout the year.

We could not run the Refuse to Use program without committed partners and volunteers. To ensure the future of the RTU program twice yearly, The Collaborative meets with business stakeholders to review the program and make sure that it is working for all of the partners. We review what could advance the program and how we need to market the program. Stakeholders provide feedback for us to use to improve the program and The Collaborative provides stakeholders with statistics that they can use to justify their tremendous investment. Refuse to Use volunteers are thanked publicly at the kick off and at the end of the season and rewarded with the same incentives that the participants receive. A survey communicates to The Collaborative if a volunteer is withdrawing. Committed volunteers then find a suitable replacement that is then vetted by the Programs Coordinator and the other volunteers.

Schools are required to sign Memorandums of Understanding every other year or yearly in the event of an administration change. This memorandum of understanding requires the schools to share information about students in RTU who have used alcohol, tobacco and other drugs. The agreement allows us to provide resources and support to families whose youth are using harmful substances. This is a confidential agreement so when a pass is revoked the employees at the mountain do not get to know the reason. Only the school and The Collaborative have this information, we work together to ensure that the family has the resources it needs. The Collaborative believes all children, teens and adults may make unhealthy decisions, but will be given the opportunity to make healthy choices with the advocacy and support of The Collaborative. When a participant has their pass revoked because of a report of substance use, there is no figure wagging or closing the door. A letter is sent home to make aware of the pass terminated, an inquiry of a referral to professional help the student may need, and welcoming the student to participate in the program for the following year. The Collaborative's agreement to the school includes sharing evaluation results and reporting changes. This MOU keeps school participation sustainable.

The memorandum of understanding for schools also requires that schools participate in the YRBS and share the data with The Collaborative. This is particularly important because four of our Refuse to Use schools are private and their participation is not tied to state funding. Other elements of our MOU include providing space for activities and promoting RTU using their internal communication mechanisms.

## **F. Implementation (25 points)**

### **What makes RTU innovative? Refuse to Use:**

- Requires a pledge to be substance free
- Provides 5 substance use prevention events outside of school time over six months
- Partners with large stakeholders in the community to provide an incentive
- Uses dedicated school and community volunteers to facilitate the events
- Requires a pledge from parents
- Requires parental attendance at two events
- Supports teen involvement in healthy alternatives by providing a healthy incentive

Refuse to Use leverages community partnerships to increase teens exposure to substance use prevention education, facilitate parent and teen communication and encourage choosing a healthy alternative to substance use. The educational component of the program are five substance use prevention education workshops with the kick-off and intergenerational dialogue night event attended by parents also. Topics for the educational piece include: alcohol, marijuana, prescription drugs, refusal skills and other drug topics including but not limited to steroid use, energy drinks, and synthetic drugs.

RTU volunteers are comprised of school teachers and administrators, parents and interested community members. Volunteers receive an hour and a half training in August in preparation for the start of the program season. New volunteers meet individually with the Program Coordinator to go over protocols. Discussed at the training is as follows: any new policies added to the program, review of new materials and procedures for the year, kick off overview of events and signed out tasks, mentor advice (what will help to know as first year rep, and time with colleagues to organize dates and events. These volunteers participate in the program for their passion and genuine interest educating students positive outcomes when making healthy choices. As a representative volunteer, they also stand at the kick off and take the pledge to support students to be substance free.

The 400+ students who choose to participate in RTU must attend the mandatory kick off in September. Their parent(s) or caring adults are required to attend the kick off with their student. The Collaborative invites key stakeholders to the kick off to give recognition; law enforcement, those in the medical field, heads of the participating schools, Department of Health representatives and delegates from the partnering organizations to help students acknowledge that adults in this community care about the students' well-being, care they are taking a pledge to challenge and better themselves and for students to know what they are committing to will not go unnoticed.

*Visualize:* 425 students, the students' adult representatives, community stakeholders and the volunteers who happen to be teachers at these participating schools come together and take the pledges. It amplifies the message of coming together as a unified group that wants to support and be supported in making healthy decisions. All of this builds the capacity of the the community to be able to receive information and continue the conversation after the event is through.

Dialogue night is based on the same premise as the kick off event but *almost* better. January is the program's dialogue night event month. Each group hosts a dialogue night that is about two hours long. Being together, having discussions, making the visual connection that not one student is in this alone and that there are people out there that want them to succeed and are willing to support them to succeed. Can you feel *it* yet? This event is when participants and parents speak out and discuss topics of under age drinking, prescription drug misuse, YRBS statistics, volunteerism, refusal skills, and other topics that are appropriate to the age groups and current. Dialogue night is designed to have parents and their students be in different groups so when they leave the event, the dialogue continues, "what did your group talk about? Do you agree with what that person said? Why? What is it that makes you believe that?" The discussion continues in the car, at the dinner table or the event makes it easier for the parent or student to bring up a particular topic that was discussed and bring up. In past dialogue nights, local, regional, state and national articles are discussed whether it's about the legalization of marijuana, volunteering, fundraising, parties getting busted, incidents that happen because of being impaired. We believe whether the dialogue happens around a table or in a car, one on one or as a group, the most important thing is that it's happening. With a few simple ground rules, respecting peoples opinions but not having to agree with them, allowing those who want to speak a chance to speak or write, stay engaged in one conversation (no side conversations), and putting in your best efforts of participation- makes out to be a great discussion session. Dialogue night set up and topics description, dialogue night continuing the conversation outside RTU and increasing the capacity of individual families to hear and learn the risk and harms of substance use and increasing the capacity of the community as a whole when the conversation continues on social media.

Adult volunteers keep track of what materials, sources, and speakers they have incorporated into their curriculums. This informs other volunteers about what their participants have gone through in the previous year. It reduces duplications as participants move up in grade level and have different volunteers running their event this tracking system prevents the same material being used. This tracking system explains and promotes resources volunteers may not have known about. Substance use prevention event

curriculums are drawn from evidence based curriculums, Hazelton curriculums, Human Relations Media, health care and service provider presentations and/or creditable online resources. Experienced teachers have vetted these curriculums and developed other event plans that are then shared on the resource tracking form. The tracking form also encourages RTU volunteers that have used that curriculum to provide feedback about the successes and learning opportunities from the event. With guidance of the Program Coordinator, tracking has become easier and more efficient. All events are encouraging to employ active learning and volunteers are encouraged to think outside of the box to hold their events.

Program procedures have a solid structure but, The Collaborative remains flexible knowing that there are many moving parts. Our goal is to increase the exposure of teens and families to prevention education events, not exclude them. Students who would like to participate in the RTU program must attend the kick off in September. This event is planned by RTU volunteers and Collaborative staff and is mandatory for students to attend with a parent or caring adult in order to take the pledge together and understand what they are committing to for seven months. Over time we have had to become flexible to this mandatory requirement, we film or replicate the event for families who contact us prior to the event with an acceptable reason for needing to miss the kick off. The program incentive, season pass to Stratton Mountain, Riley Rink or Viking Nordic, stays intact until the winter season for that organization closes; roughly seven months. Thirty-five adult volunteers plan dates for the four events that will happen at their school for their designated grades and facilitate the curriculum from our library of Human Relations Media booklets, health care and service provider presentations and/or creditable online resources. Events begin with a last at least an hour and a half. Students must sign in for attendance to be credited for being at the event. Monthly events are themed alcohol, tobacco, marijuana, prescription drugs. We remain flexible though to accommodate topics that come up as relevant for a particular school or class. When students attend three events they are eligible to receive their pass of their choice; Stratton Mountain Resort, Riley Rink, or Viking Nordic cross-country skiing center. To maintain their pass they must continue to attend the last two events in January and February.

Students have just as busy schedules as adults do. They can't be at two places at once; soccer practice and a RTU event at the same time. Although the reps do their best to accommodate student schedules, there will always be a few who can not make their designated school/grade event. Students who find themselves in this position can RSVP with another school/grade to attend their event, attend a scheduled make up event or do a reading assignment. Flexibility accommodates busy students to encourage participation in RTU but there are deadlines at which students need to abide. Students cannot just decide to participate in RTU and think they can hop in with everyone else. They have to put in the time and make up events to receive their pass or to maintain their pass. Students who do not have three events by Thanksgiving break do not receive their pass. Once the student has attended a make up event or completed the reading assignment they receive credit. December is a month for students to attend a make up event The Collaborative hosts a Healthy Alternatives Fair, Sticker Shock, Middle School Skate Night or students can complete the reading assignment and report out on the reading.

February is when the fifth and final event occurs. The deadline to complete the event is before schools go on their February break to entice students to attend the last event so they have all break to take advantage of their pass. At the end of each event, attendance is checked to see who needs a make-up event and whose pass needs to be turned off until the student completes the make-up event. This holds the student accountable for following through and making the commitment to the program. If a student attended all five of the designated events, they receive eight to ten hours of substance use prevention education in a dialogue setting between their peers, parents and caring adults.

The program comes full circle after students complete their five events, they receive an all summer production pass to the Dorset Theatre Festival.

RTU has been replicated and adapted at another local ski resort. The core structure is the same; prevention education events with parental involvement at two events. They have adapted our model for their communities needs. Other areas have contacted us about using the program and we have shared our materials, so far we have only brought new schools on from other areas in Southern Vermont.

The Collaborative has changed community norms through positive social norm projects that were the results from community data. We targeted adults who served alcohol to teens. When we began our campaign the statistic showed that 77% of community adults would not serve alcohol to teens after four years of a positive social norms campaign that statistic increased to 92%. The campaign states 7 out of 10 Manchester area parents do not provide alcohol to teens, are you the odd one out? The phrase came with a series of pictures with ten of something, ten eggs, ten flamingoes, ten kiwis, ten bowling pins. On each photo seven were one color and 3 were an odd color. As the statistic rose so changed our campaign all the way up to 9 out of 10. People really remembered the images and the message. We have not looked into the community norms of those in the Refuse to Use program versus those that do not participate but look forward to a time when we can use an evaluator to help us with that project.

### **G. Evaluation (40 points)**

Thirty-Five RTU volunteers host and facilitate the education events and volunteer 25 hours on average prepping and facilitating events, attending RTU planning meetings, and managing communications between the student participants. These volunteers are teachers in the participating schools, highly involved parents and community stakeholders. Throughout the years, evaluations have been sent to parents and students to gauge how well the program is doing and what we can do to make the program even better. Within our means, we grow and adjust the program accordingly to ensure families participate, participants learn and substance use decreases in our community.

*“I think what attracted us to The Collaborative and Refuse to Use as a family was the positive message combined with the support activities and events to promote healthy choices. I think it is a great balance of peer involvement and support, community outreach and education with incentives to commit to staying sober and drug free.”* - Parent of high school and middle school participant.

*“I attended the Refuse to Use program to receive my season pass to Stratton. One event in particular changed my view on just how important refusing to use drugs really is. I knew it was bad, and that I could die from it, and I had already decided that I wouldn't be a part of it. However the aspect of losing my family's trust really hit me. It changed from just a physical issue to an emotional issue. I've learned that trust means everything in a relationship, especially with your parents. Thanks to the Refuse to Use program, I've renewed my personal oath to “refuse to use”.* - 8<sup>th</sup> grade participant.

All Collaborative staff have been trained in Results Based Accountability and we use it with all program evaluations. When we review the Refuse to Use program we consistently look at how we can make it better. An example of RBA in action is Collaborative staff, participants and volunteers regularly assessing the program. After seeing a huge drop in participation with the senior class, we used the Turn the Curve exercise. As a result, the senior class has a different curriculum that holds students accountable for learning and teaching a topic of personal interest. After meeting with the seniors and adult volunteers a new curriculum was built, the seniors really liked the change. One senior said, “I liked that the curriculum was a lot looser than it has been in the past. I liked learning about what interests me and doing my own research on it. I liked hearing about what my peers were interested in as well.” Now the senior group takes the season to prepare for a public service announcement to present in February

Our goals and outcomes:

Goal: Reduce substance use in area middle and high school youth	RTU participant survey indicates a reduction in high school alcohol use from 2014-15 to 2015-16 of 13% and in marijuana use a reduction of 9%.
Objective: Provide outside of school time substance use prevention education at area schools	Over 100 hours of prevention education provided at area schools.
Objective: Involve teacher and parent volunteers to provide substance use education from each participating school	Over 35 volunteers clocking 25 hours each on average.
Objective: Mandate parent participation in two events	Over 500 parents attend 2 events yearly.
Goal: Increase access to healthy alternatives to substance use	Over 400 season passes to Stratton Mountain Resort, Riley Rink or Viking Nordic Distributed. Over 300 passes to Dorset Theatre Fest Summer Program.
Objective: Partner with local businesses to provide incentives to youth	Four local businesses provide over \$100,000 in incentives to area youth.
Objective: Use volunteers to show youth a variety of healthy alternatives	Six area volunteers provide examples of healthy alternatives for the healthy alternative fair make up event. 35 RTU volunteers talk about healthy alternatives at substance use prevention events.
Objective: Secure opportunities for family participation in the healthy alternative activity	Four Sunday ski days offered at \$20 per family member. Four reduced price Friday night family skate nights.
Goal: Engage the whole community in supporting substance free youth	From our annual community survey: 87% in our community consider prevention programs to be a good investment 92% believe prevention and reduction of youth SU is important for our community 69% believe they play an active role in preventing youth substance use
Objective: Use social and traditional media to promote RTU	The Collaborative has over 2000 followers on social media and posts information at least seven times a week regarding the RTU program and the risk and harms of substance use for youth including brain development.
Objective: Use social and traditional media to educate about the risk and harms of substance use	See above.

Goal: Engage youth in substance use prevention	100% of participants in the senior program reported enjoying the program because of the responsibility of leading a substance use prevention activity.
Objective: Increase youth participation through leadership opportunities	Over 50 youth volunteers led 10 dialogue nights. 24 senior participants presented PSA projects to parents and other younger participants.

The RTU participants are surveyed before the program begins and since the 2015 season are surveyed post program participation also. Students who participate in the Refuse to Use program are significantly less likely to use alcohol or marijuana in the last 30 days than the general population as surveyed in the Youth Risk Behavior Survey

Past 30 day use:		
	Alcohol	Marijuana
2013 YRBS Bennington/Rutland (High School)	33%	28%
2013-2014 Refuse to Use (High School)pre	22%	15%
2015-2016 Refuse to Use (High School)pre	9%	6%
2013 YRBS Bennington/Rutland (Middle School)	4%	To few students
2013-2014 Refuse to use (Middle School)pre	0%	.01%
2015-2016 Refuse to use (Middle School)pre	1%	0%

To date, there are ten participating schools, thirty-five volunteers, over 400 student participants, and over 100 hours of substance use prevention education yearly. The completion rate for all schools in 15-16 was 77.3% in a season where the snow was late in coming and early to leave the slopes. Participants successfully complete the program when they have not been caught using substances and when they have attended all five required prevention education events. The most common reason for participants not completing the program is due to lack of attendance. Sometimes this is because the snow conditions are bad, sometimes teens get a job at the mountain and receive a pass and sometimes students lose interest in skiing/riding and the program.

The Collaborative believes that a pledge to be substance free, out of school time prevention events and healthy alternatives together build resiliency. Our statistics support this belief. In 2014 – 15, 94% and in 2015 – 16, 98% of participants said that they plan to honor their pledge. 79% in 2014-15 and 92% in 2015-16 say that the pledge and prevention activities help them to refuse to use substances. In 2014, less than 3% of passes were pulled because of substance use.

## H. Program Management

A board of directors, whose numbers range from six to nine members, holds the final decision-making authority for The Collaborative. Members serve for two years and can serve no more than two consecutive terms. Terms are staggered to ensure continuity. Exiting board members are asked to serve in an advisory capacity, and current members mentor new ones.

Adults of all ages, gender and socioeconomic statuses are represented on the board. We also seek to have LGBT representation and representation from someone in recovery. Teens serve on the advisory board.



The board is responsible for setting policy and for fiscal oversight; it follows best practices in fulfilling its fiduciary duty. The board also supervises the Executive Director through monthly meetings and a yearly review.

- The Executive Director is employed to manage the organization: She oversees all staff, including the programs coordinator, Community Coordinator and a part-time business manager.
- The Business Manager keeps financial records and provides reports quarterly and at other times as requested by the board of directors.
- The programs coordinator supervises the **Refuse to Use** program, Extended Day Program site coordinator, who supervises the staff for that program and for the summer camps. The Program Coordinator also supervises program volunteers, who help with programs such as Girls on the Run and serve as mentors in the mentoring program.
- The Community Coordinator manages online forums and facilitates communication with coalition partners and the community at large.

Weekly staff meetings keep all paid and volunteer staff up-to-date on work plans and initiatives. Each staff meeting has a learning component, regarding either substance abuse prevention or another aspect of The Collaborative's work.

The Executive Director and Community Coordinator guide coalition members in their service. In turn, coalition volunteers guide the direction of programs that The Collaborative is involved in, generate resources, provide advice for key projects and spread The Collaborative's message. Coalition members are best able to make decisions on behalf of the organizations they represent and are most closely connected to their organizations' prevention efforts.

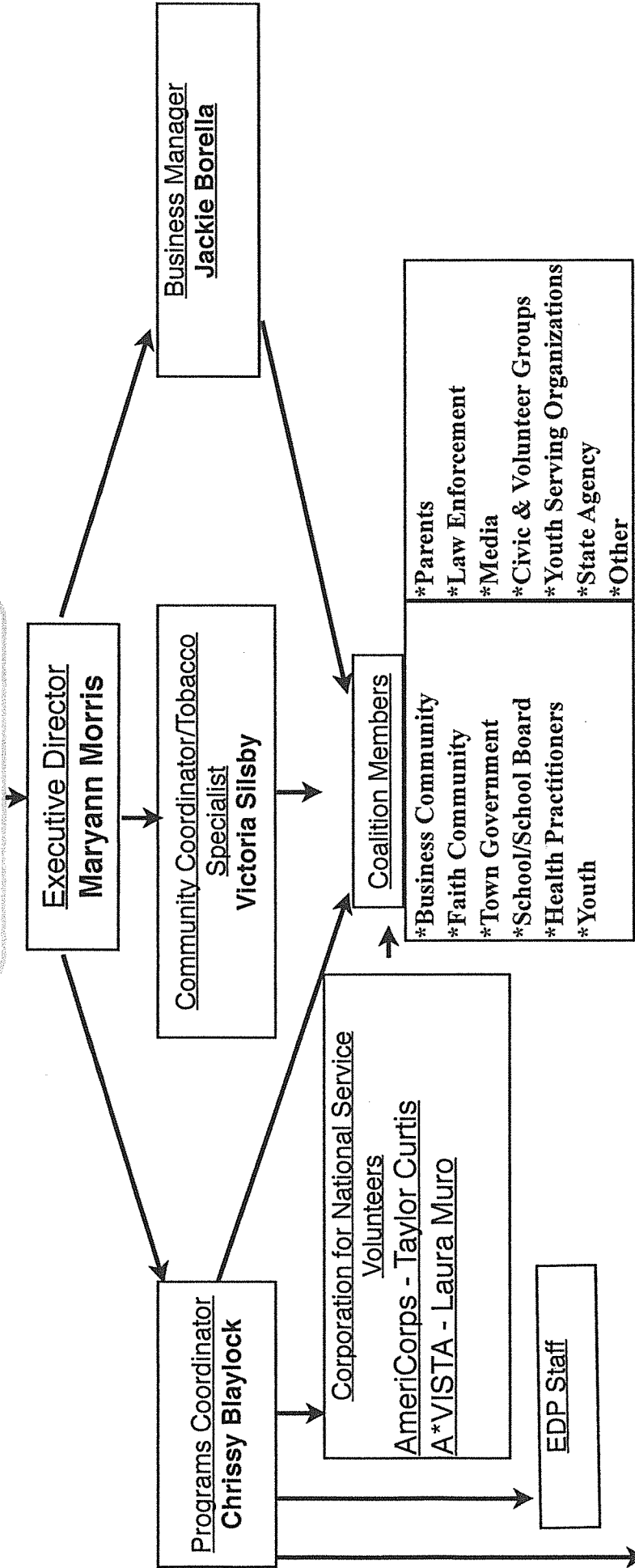
The Collaborative's subcommittees include:

- board development
- fundraising/finance
- Extended Day Program
- **Refuse to Use** program

Staff members lead the program committees, such as the Extended Day Program Committee and the Refuse to Use Committee.

The Collaborative is funded through a Vermont Department of Health grant, foundation and town support, fundraising and fee for service programs.

# The Collaborative Board of Directors



- \* Refuse to Use Ski & Ride Program
- \* Extended Day Program
- \* Collaborative Camp
- \* Mentoring
- \* Middle School & High School Programs
- \* Community Events

- \* Refuse to Use Ski & Ride Program
- \* Merchant Trainings
- \* Retailer Recognition
- \* School based Prevention Curriculums
- \* ATOD Community Education
- \* Peer Leadership Programs
- \* Parent Network Programs
- \* Community Garden
- \* Substance Free Social & Recreational Programs

- \* Coalition Development
- \* Mountain Communities TV
- \* Problem ID & Referral
- \* VT Kids Against Tobacco
- \* Volunteer Recruitment
- \* Students Against Destructive Decisions
- \* Social Norms Marketing
- \* Social Marketing
- \* Smoke and Drug free workplace support
- \* Community trainings

"2016 Exemplary Awards" Budget Narrative

<b>Income</b>	
Individual Contributions from Annual Appeal & Auction:	\$ 2,500
DelPrete Foundation Restricted Support:	\$ 5,000
Town Support from 6 Local Towns:	\$ 3,000
Program Fees – 402 participants @\$50 each:	\$20,100
<b>Total Income</b>	<b>\$30,600</b>

<b>Expense</b>		
<b>Personnel Total:</b>		<b>\$14,155</b>
Executive Director: Oversees all aspects of program- 5% FTE	\$ 2,195	
Substance Abuse Prevention Coordinator: 5% FTE	\$ 1,976	
Programs Coordinator: 11% FTE	\$ 3,473	
Business Manager: 10% FTE	\$ 2,181	
Americorp/Vista: 7% FTE	\$ 1,500	
Fringe @25%:	\$ 2,831	
(includes payroll taxes, WC, UE & Health Ins)		
<b>Other Expenses Total:</b>	<b>\$16,501</b>	
Accountant and Payroll Fees:	\$ 125	
Cost of Passes: 402 participants @\$35 each	\$14,070	
Mileage: 950 miles @.56/mile	\$ 532	
Events:	\$ 976	
Curriculum:	\$ 500	
Credit Card Fees:	\$ 297	
<b>Total Expense:</b>	<b>\$30,656</b>	
<b>In-Kind Contribution:</b>		
402 participants @\$294 per season pass per participant	\$118,188	
14 scholarship participants @\$329	\$ 4,606	